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RHMFIIU/HQ USNORTHCOM PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHMFIS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 003779

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [MX](#)

SUBJECT: SOLDIER KILLINGS PROMPT NEW DEPLOYMENTS IN GUERRERO

MEXICO 00003779 001.2 OF 002

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - CAPTION ADDED

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Mexican military has deployed over 300 members of elite units as part of its efforts to track down the perpetrators of the killings and beheadings of eight military soldiers, seven whose bodies were discovered early December 21 in Guerrero and another on December 9. The assassinations of the seven soldiers reportedly were connected to a firefight two days before in which three individuals were killed and after which the army detained seven civilians. The Office of the Attorney General is conducting an investigation. President Calderon and the Mexican Congress condemned the killings of soldiers and called for a firm response. Some analysts anticipate that the Mexican military will step up operations nationwide targeting organized crime as a result of these and other brutal killings of its own personnel, but opine it will need better intelligence amongst other capabilities for long-term success. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) According to a Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) press release, seven members of the Mexican military and an ex-Director of the State Police were found killed and decapitated in Chilpancingo, State of Guerrero early in the morning of December 21. The heads of the victims were left in a bag found next to a Sam's Club supermarket in Chilpancingo with an unsigned message, "For every one that you kill, we will kill ten." The bodies, which showed signs of torture, were found in two places off the highway between Acapulco and Cuernavaca. Another body of a soldier was found on December 9. Reports indicate that the seven soldiers were intercepted the evening of December 20, one by one, as they were leaving the military installations of the 41st infantry battalion in Chilpancingo. The crime was reportedly connected to a firefight the day before in the town of Teololapan, Guerrero (located some 60 miles northwest of Chilpancingo) which resulted in the deaths of three gunmen and the military's detention of seven individuals. The Office of the Mexican Attorney General (PGR) is conducting an investigation into these killings as well as the seven civilians who were detained in the firefight.

3. (U) The Mexican Government has responded quickly and forcefully to these killings. President Felipe Calderon insisted violence would not "intimidate the armed forces" and that his government would firmly take the fight to the cartels, which represent a threat to Mexican society. The Permanent Commission of the Mexican Congress -- the caretaker group managing Congress' agenda while the Congress is in recess -- condemned the killings, called for a quick

investigation, and insisted the government should not stand down in the face of this violence. The Commander of the Ninth Military Region Enrique Alonso Garrido described the attack on the soldiers as a "grave error" on the part of Mexico's criminal elements and declared "open war" on crime.

¶4. (U) As of December 23, the army had established checkpoints around Chilpancingo; four helicopters and an airplane also reportedly were flying over the city on a regular basis. Separately, the military brought in over 300 members of its Special Forces Airmobile Group (GAFE) and deployed troops to nine municipalities in Guerrero to conduct searches in areas of the state out of which hired killers of the cartels are thought to operate. SEDENA and Mexico's Ministry of Interior speculate the Zetas were responsible for the killings based on the message that accompanied the bodies.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: The gruesome killing of these seven soldiers represents the cartels' most brazen attack on the military since Calderon came into office in 2006 and declared war on organized crime. Just two months ago, in October, 13 soldiers were killed -- five of whom were beheaded -- in Nuevo Leon. However, those killings occurred over the span of a week in several separate events and it still isn't clear whether those soldiers were killed in retaliation for an earlier drug bust or because they were involved in narcotrafficking. In this latest instance, however, the killers' own message indicates they chillingly targeted the soldiers in revenge for some prior assault on the region's criminal network. Some analysts believe these latest killings could prove a tipping point in prompting the Mexican military to take on a significantly more aggressive approach in going after the narcotraffickers. Of course, these same experts also point out that to be successful -- in addition to more manpower and equipment -- the army and Mexico's security forces in general need more intelligence about where

MEXICO 00003779 002.2 OF 002

the cartels are and how they operate. END COMMENT.

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